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Yevgeny Y. (LT. COL.)

CIA's 'Biggest Catch' Tells Of Espionage in W. Germany

By Dan Morgan
Washington Post Foreign Service

B O N N, Nov. 4—Some-
where in the Washington
area this weekend Yevgeny
Yevgenyovich Runge, 39, has
come to the end of his
journey.

It was a journey that lift-
ed him out of the obscurity
of his Ukrainian homeland,
took him through four iden-

tities and brought him final-
ly into contact with the
secrets of at least three gov-
ernments.

Since 1949 Runge—alias
Willy Gast, alias Heinz Mor-
mann, alias Major Maximov
—has been a professional
Russian spy, but not of the
ordinary sort.

In the view of Western
intelligence authorities, his
surrender to the American

Central Intelligence Agency
in West Berlin sometime in
the last 45 days marks the
most important catch of a
Communist operative since
World War II.

Agents Pinpointed

According to these sources,
the story he is now telling
has revealed details about
the Soviet spy-training cen-
ter in Karlshorst in East

Berlin; has proved conclu-
sively that the Soviet Union
operates its own incredibly
intricate spy network in
West Germany, separate
from East Germany's; has
indicated that the Allied
contingency plan for West
Berlin has been handed over
to the Russians, and has pin-
pointed other agents in West
Germany, including present

or former employees of
Bonn's Foreign Ministry.

But in the view of some
intelligence experts Runge's
main value may lie in the
detailed information he is
providing about the little-
known techniques, work and
training of a rare type of
espionage specialist — the
"illegal" agent who melts
into his environment.

Unlike such big catches as
Yuri Loginov in South Afri-
ca, Runge never carried a
diplomatic passport, never
came in contact with the
Soviet Union's corps of "di-
plomatic spies" and never
went near an embassy, as
far as Western investigators
can tell.

Faded Into Society

For him, diplomatic cover
was unnecessary. His cover,

which he used from the time
he entered West Germany in
1955 until 1967, was his abili-
ty to fade grayly into Ger-
man society.

How many more Russian
agents like him are now
operating in West Germany
are unknown, but the num-
ber probably is not very
large.

Becoming accepted into
German life was not particu-
larly difficult for Runge.
He was born in Novo Soley-
oye, a "Volga German" from
a part of the Ukraine where
the German language and
German mannerisms have
persisted for centuries. (In
the Babel of German dia-
lects in postwar West Ger-
many, his was not a prob-
lem.)

After the Nisei-like dis-
placement of Volga Germans

by Russians during World
War II, Runge wandered in-
to East Germany and be-
came an interpreter for the
Russian occupation forces.
The chronology of events
after that has been made
available by Western intel-
ligence "in the public inter-
est."

Recruited by KGB

In 1949, according to his
statement to investigators,
he was recruited by the
KGB (Interior Ministry's
state intelligence apparatus).

In 1952, after "Basic Train-
ing" he began three years
of preparations for his West
German assignment. The
length has surprised even
Western intelligence sources
with high regard for the
thoroughness of Soviet meth-
ods.

He was given his first new

identity—that of Willy Gast
and a West German passport
and documentation were ob-
tained with the help of
agents in the West Berlin
police department.

The KGB supplied him a
wife, an East German called
Valentina, and in 1955 the
couple entered West Ger-
many. In the years that fol-
lowed, Runge set himself up
in business as a jukebox and
pinball-machine salesman,
living and operating mainly
in the Frankfurt and Co-
logne areas.

He sold the business at a
profit before turning him-
self in to American author-
ities.

First Contact

Shortly after his arrival,
Runge made his first contact

with a man identified by
Western sources as "Mar-
graf." This man contacted
his sister, Klara Pieschel,
and she in turn persuaded
her husband, Leonard, a jan-
itor at the French embassy
in Bonn, to work for Runge.

In raids following Runge's
defection last month, Pie-
schel was arrested on sus-
picion of stealing a key to
the embassy safe and steal-
ing NATO documents.

In 1959, Runge himself
was contacted by an East
German agent named Heinz
Suetterlin, who was posing
as a photographer. Accord-
ing to intelligence sources,
Suetterlin had been sent to
West Germany with the
names of three secretaries in
the West German Foreign
Office and orders to marry
one. He selected a brunette
named Leonore, who was
working at an insignificant
job in Lille, France.

Shortly thereafter she was
transferred to the Foreign
Office in Bonn. This con-
vinced investigators that her
career had either been ma-
nipulated or accurately fore-
seen by agents within the
Foreign Office. These agents,
it is said, have now been
identified and have con-
fessed.

Takes Documents Home

The new Mrs. Suetterlin
was assigned to work in the
office of a foreign service
administrator identified as
Knut Neisse. In the early
1960s she began taking docu-
ments from the office at
lunchtime to be photo-
graphed by her husband at
home.

The film was then passed
on to Runge, who mailed it
to contacts in Switzerland
and Austria. The contacts
handed the film over to the
Russian embassies in their
countries.

Original filed in Runge

Continued

In late 1960 or early 1961, a curious event took place, according to statements by Runge. He was told to "forget about" the Pieschel ring, which he carefully established, and concentrate entirely on the activities of the Suetterlins.

Analysts are not sure why. The janitor Pieschel may have been turned over to another "illegal" without Runge's knowledge is (something Pieschel denies) or the French information may have suddenly become available from some other source. Even the possibility that the Russians halted the French Embassy operation for fear of endangering rapidly improving relations with France has not been entirely rejected.

The importance of the Foreign Office documents photographed by the Suetterlins cannot be weighed because the films were usually mailed off unseen by Runge.

West German Foreign Office spokesmen have sought to minimize their importance. But it is known that "hundreds" of documents were copied, including cables, personnel files of foreign service officers would be of special interest because of leads on homosexuality, drinking problems and other weaknesses that would alert Soviet agents in the field to vulnerable "targets."

In Moscow, the agent and his family requested a final trip to West Berlin to conclude affairs before a long assignment in Moscow. Runge used this opportunity to turn himself in.

Why Moscow wanted to end such an allegedly productive ring as Runge's is unknown, but his recall raises the possibility that he was under suspicion.

On Oct. 12, Bonn police arrested Pieschel and the Suetterlins. By that time, Runge and his family had already been flown to America. Then, early on the morning of Oct. 16, Leonore Suetterlin hanged herself with her pajamas in the Cologne Women's Reformatory. Authorities said she was distressed to learn that Suetterlin had been instructed to marry her.

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One indication of the document's value is that on Dec. 13, 1964, Runge was presented Medal for Distinguished Service No. 1360, Committee of State Security by the USSR. The medal was bestowed on him by Vladimir Semichastny, chief of the KGB.

Runge presumably was decorated during his several trips to the Soviet Union, which he undertook under the name of Soviet Army Major Mannov. For his trips to East Germany, he had another passport bearing the name of Heinz Mormann.

Was Runge a double agent, recruited years ago by the Americans to keep an eye both on the Russians and the West Germans? Western intelligence sources insist he was not, although how he was spotted and contacted by the Central Intelligence Agency (or when)

remains officially unexplained.

What is known, according to intelligence sources, is that last spring Runge, his wife and their eight-year-old son were ordered back to the Soviet Union. On the way through East Berlin, Runge did a stint as an instructor at the Karlshorst Training School. Neither the names nor the nationalities of the 30 recruits there were revealed to Runge, but he has supplied his questioners with descriptions of them.